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MEMORIAL ADDRESS

OF

HON. CHARLES E. FULLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 12, 1919

ON

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

WASHINGTON
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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HON. CHARLES E. FULLER,

OF ILLINOIS.

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

The SPEAKER. By order of the House the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. FULLER] is recognized for 15 minutes.

Mr. FULLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker and gentlemen of the House of Representatives, it is well that we should pause for a brief moment from the strenuous duties of this session to recall something of the life and services of that greatest of Americans, Abraham Lincoln. His life, his character, his greatness is more apparent and grows brighter and brighter as the years come and go. To honor him and his memory is but to honor ourselves. To follow his precepts and his example is to glorify our country and its institutions. As we listened to the reading of that wonderful Gettysburg Address, we could realize how the very soul of a great man and of a great people could be expressed in few words—but words that grip the heart of a Nation. The great oration of Everett on that occasion was received by the multitude with tumultuous cheers and applause, but his words are forgotten. Lincoln's brief address, following that oration, was received in silence—silence and awe, as profound as though the great audience had listened to a voice from another world; and the words of that address live to-day, and will live forever, as the expression of the hopes, the wishes, the ideals of the lovers of freedom and free government the world over. As Lincoln then said, "Let us here highly resolve, * * * that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." We should here cherish that sentiment to-day and give to it its full meaning and expression. Abraham Lincoln represented that sentiment in all his life and all his public service. His greatness of mind and heart was not derived from modern education or from schools and colleges. It was from the very soil from which he sprang. He did not look over the people's heads. He sympathized with them in all their thoughts, their ideals, and their aspirations. He was of the people, and for the people, and therein lay his greatness of soul and thought and action. In his sympathy with and love for the people, his kindness of heart he came as near to the Divine example of the Man of Nazareth as any other man who has made an impression on the history of the world. Coupled with his great heart, the Almighty gave him also great intellect, that he might in the good providence of God lead a free people to higher and better things. Much may be found in the record of his life and teachings that we may well consider now in connection with the tremendous problems that confront this Nation and the world.

I recall one thing he often said, it was this: "Teach and practice economy; that is one of the first and highest virtues. It begins with saving money." I commend that advice to the majority in this Congress, and to the present administration, as being worthy of thoughtful and even prayerful consideration. I apprehend that the people of this country will soon be heard in very earnest commendation of this advice of Abraham Lincoln.

Gen. Richard J. Oglesby, of Illinois, then a young man, but afterwards a Senator of the United States and three times governor of Illinois, was on the most intimate terms with President Lincoln during his term of office. I have often heard Gen. Oglesby repeat the advice which Lincoln gave him, which was, "Keep close to the people, Dick, keep close to the people, and they will never mislead you." It was good advice to follow. Too many in this day of men in high positions look over the heads of the people and fail to appreciate the ultimate fact that all power rests with the people and that "The voice of the people is the voice of God."

We have just emerged from a great world war, another demonstration of the eternal conflict that has waged for ages between autocratic power and the right of the people to govern themselves. Again in the good providence of God the people have won in the contest, but let us not forget that it is the victory of the people and not of any man or any set of men or of any clique or clan; and what the people have won in this last great conflict they will at every cost maintain and perpetuate. The brave boys of America who have been fighting the battles of humanity are coming home, some of them in health and strength, thank God, and others with cruel wounds as evidence of what the conflict has cost them. Let us now remember Lincoln's words, "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the Nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." [Applause.]

To us mortals the ways of the Almighty are ofttimes inscrutable, but I believe that his guiding hand has ever been over this Nation and that, as Lincoln quoted, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." The great emancipator's work was done and God called him for his own, using the cruel hand of the assassin for the purpose. As Lincoln's life was ebbing away in the early hours of the morning in that little chamber on Tenth Street, in this city, the anxious watchers at the bedside stood with bated breath until that loving heart ceased to beat, when the great Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, tenderly crossed the hands upon the lifeless breast as in awestruck tones he said, "He belongs to the ages." And so Abraham Lincoln sleeps to-day in the capital city of the State from which he came, and there thousands of freedom-loving pilgrims come, and will come for generations in the future, to pay tribute to the name of one of the world's immortals.

Illinois is justly proud of the immortal names that illumine its history all down through the hundred years of its statehood in this Union.

Not without thy wondrous story,
Illinois, Illinois,
Can be writ the Nation's glory,
Illinois, Illinois,
On the record of thy years
Abraham Lincoln's name appears,
Grant and Logan and our tears,
Illinois, Illinois.

[Applause.]

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